

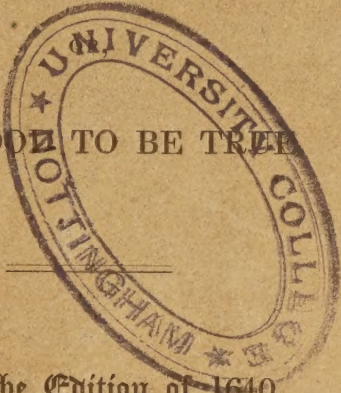
V C
J. C. Robinson

THE KING

AND

A POOR NORTHERN MAN:

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE



From the Edition of 1640.

—
ATTRIBUTED TO MARTIN PARKER.
—

LONDON:
REPRINTED FOR THE PERCY SOCIETY,
BY C. RICHARDS, ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

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ONE COPY

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CHURCHILL, LONDON

1791

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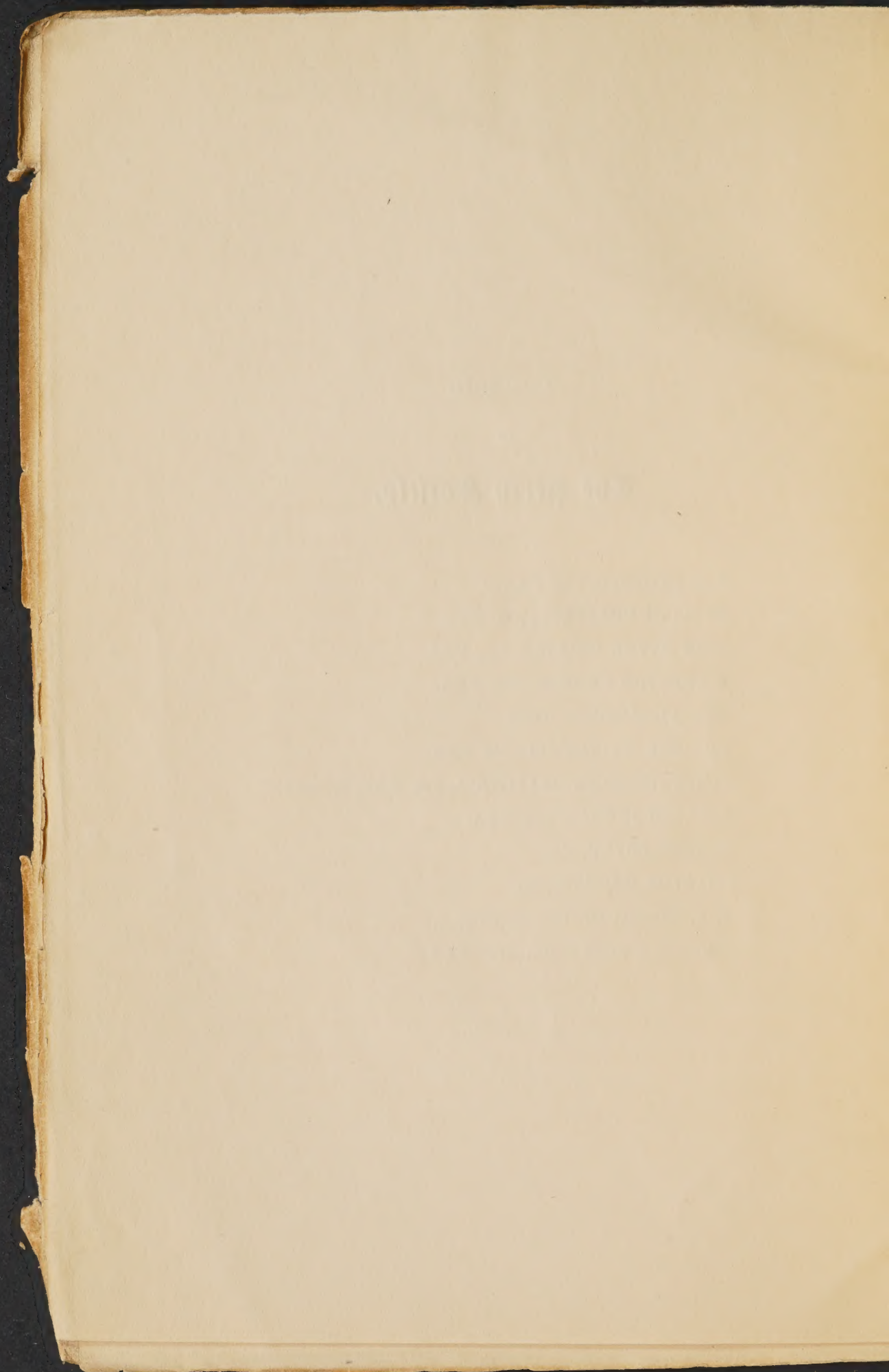
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INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH somewhat modernized in the following copy, there is little doubt that the humorous story of "The King and the poor Northern Man" is much older than 1640. It reads in particular places like a narrative of considerable antiquity; but when it was "printed by Tho. Cotes," whose name appears at the bottom of the title-page of the black-letter edition which we have employed, it was intended that the reader should suppose the tale a new one, and that it was the authorship of Martin Parker, the celebrated and popular ballad-maker: his well-known initials are placed quite at the end, after the word "*Finis*," but possibly he was not concerned in the imposition, which might be concocted by Francis Grove, the bookseller. No older edition is extant than that we have reprinted, and as far as yet appears it is the only remaining copy of it. We find it mentioned in no bibliographical work, nor have we been able to trace it in any catalogue.

Besides the internal evidence, there is external proof of the antiquity of the story, and even of the title of the piece. In Henslowe's Diary, under the date of 1601, we meet with two entries, the first of which runs thus :

“Lent at the apoyntment of the company, and my sonne, unto Hary Chettell, in earnest of a playe called To good to be trewe or Northern Man, the some of 5^s: the 14 of novmbr. 1601.”

The second is as follows :

“Pd. at the apoyntment of Robart Shawe, and Thomas Towne, unto Mr. Hathwaye and Mr. Smythe, in part of payment of a boocke called To goode to be trewe, the 6 of Janewary 1601, the some of 1^s.”

Hence we see that as early as 1601 a play had been written by Henry Chettle, Richard Hathewaye and Wentworth Smith, called “Too good to be true, or the Northern Man,” though the second title is omitted in Henslowe's latest entry. This play was, no doubt, founded upon the popularity of the subsequent story; the incidents of which are highly laughable, and would have afforded much scope to the rustic comicalities of such actors as Pope, Singer, or Kempe.

That the story was known of old by the name of “Too good to be true” we are not without proof. The same incidents were employed in a

broadside in verse under the title of "The King and Northern Man," printed "by W.O., and to be sold by the Booksellers in Pye Corner and London Bridge," a copy of which is in the British Museum. The wording of the body of the ballad does not differ very materially from our version of 1640, but it varies at the beginning and end. The writer professes in the outset to have borrowed from a work already in print, for the broadside thus opens :

"To drive away the weary day
A book I chanc'd to take in hand,
And therein I read assuredly
A story, as you shall understand.

"Perusing many a history over,
Amongst the leaves I chanc'd to view
The books name, and the title is this,
The Second Lesson, *too good to be true.*"

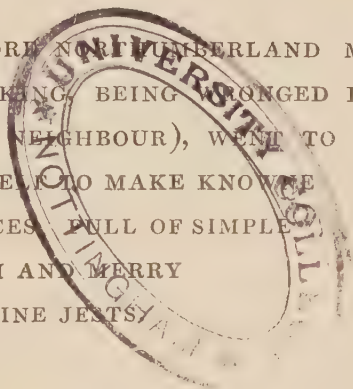
Thus we have both the titles of the play mentioned by Henslowe in his first memorandum. The book which the writer of the broadside employed must have been a now lost collection of popular histories, divided into what were called "Lessons," the "second lesson" being the tale of "The King and a poor Northern Man," or "Too good to be true." This was probably the same as the story used by Chettle, Hathwaye, and Smith for the foundation of their play, which story was

furbished up in 1640, and printed in a separate duodecimo pamphlet. It is this pamphlet that we have now accurately reprinted, with the omission only of some coarse and uncouth wood-cuts, at the time intended to be attractive.

Many of our readers will be aware that the same circumstance of a visit to the King by one of his country tenants, though much abridged, forms the subject of a comic song, which has kept its place in various modern collections.

THE KING AND
A POORE NORTHERNE MAN.

SHEWING HOW A POORE NORTHERLAND MAN,
A TENANT TO THE KING, BEING MORGED BY
A LAWYER (HIS NEIGHBOUR), WENT TO
THE KING HIMSELF TO MAKE KNOWN
HIS GRIEVANCES. FULL OF SIMPLE
MIRTH AND MERRY
PLAINE JESTS.



Printed at London by *Tho. Cotes*, and are to be sold
by *Francis Grove*, dwelling upon Snow hill.
1640.

THE
KING AND A POORE NORTHERNE MAN.

COME hearken to me all around,
and I will tell you a merry tale
Of a Northumberland man that held some ground,
which was the Kings land in a dale.

He was borne and bred thereupon,
and his father had dwelt there long before,
Who kept a good house in that country,
and stav'd the wolfe from off his doore.

Now, for this farme the good old man
just twenty shillings a yeare did pay :
At length came cruell death with his dart,
and this old farmer he soone did slay :

Who left behinde him an aude wife then,
that troubled was with mickle paine,
And with her cruches she walkt about,
for she was likewise blinde and lame.

When that his corpes were laid in the grave
his eldest sonne possesse did the farme,
At the same rent as the father before :
he took great paines and thought no harme.

By him there dwelt a Lawyer false,
that with his farme was not content,
But over the poore man still hang'd his nose,
because he did gather the King's rent.

This farme layd by the Lawyer's land,
which this vild kerne had a mind unto :
The deelee a good conscience had he in his bulke,
that sought this poore man for to undoe.

He told him he his lease had forfeite,
and that he must there no longer abide :
The King by such lownes hath mickle wrong done,
and for you the world is broad and wide.

The poore man pray'd him for to cease,
and content himselfe, if he would be willing ;
And picke no vantage in my lease,
and I will give thee forty shilling.

Its neither forty shillings, no forty pound,
Ise warrant thee, so can agree thee and me,
Unlesse thou yeeld me thy farme so round,
and stand unto my curtesie.

The poore man said he might not do sa :
his wife and his bearnes will make him ill warke.
If thou wilt with my farme let me ga,
thou seemes a good fellow, Ise give thee five marke.

The Lawyer would not be so content,
but further in the matter he means to smell.
The neighbours bad the poor man provide his rent,
and make a submission to the King him sell.

This poore man now was in a great stond,
his senses they were almost wood :
I thinke, if he had not tooke grace in 's mind
that he would never againe beene good.

His head was troubled in such a bad plight,
as though his eyes were apple gray ;
And if good learning he had not tooke
he wod a cast himselfe away.

A doughty heart he then did take,
and of his mother did blessing crave,
Taking farewell of his wife and bearnes ;
it earned his heart them thus to leave.

Thus parting with the teares in his eyne,
his bob-taild dog he out did call :
Thou salt gang with me to the King ;
and so he tooke his leave of them all.

He had a humble staffe on his backe,
a jerkin, I wat, that was of gray,
With a good blue bonnet, he thought it no lacke ;
to the king he is ganging as fast as he may.

He had not gone a mile out o' th' toone,
but one of his neighbours he did espy :
How far ist to th' King? for thither am I boone,
as fast as ever I can hye.

I am sorry for you, neighbour, he sayd,
for your simplicity I make mone :
Ise warrant you, you may ask for the King,
when nine or ten dayes journey you have gone.

Had I wist the King wond so farre
Ise neere a sought him a mile out o' th' toone :
Hes either a sought me, or wee'd neere a come nare ;
at home I had rather spent a crowne.

Thus past he alang many a weary mile,
in raine, and wet, and in foule mire,
That ere he came to lig in his bed
his dog and he full ill did tire.

Hard they did fare their charges to save,
but alas hungry stomackes outcrie for meate,
And many a sup of cold water they dranke,
when in the lang way they had nought to eate.

Full lile we know his hard griefe of mind,
and how he did long London to ken ;
And yet he thought he should finde it at last,
because he met so many men.

At length the top of kirkes he spide,
and houses so thicke that he was agast :
I thinke, quoth he, their land is full deere,
for ther's nought that here lies wast.

But when he came into the city of London,
of every man for the King he did call.
They told him that him he neede not feare,
for the King he lies now at Whitehall.

For Whitehall he then made inquire,
but as he passed strange geere he saw :
The bulkes with such gue gawes were dressed,
that his mind a tone side it did draw.

Gud God, unto himselfe he did say,
what a deelee a place I am come unto !
Had a man, I thinke, a thousne pounds in's purse,
himselfe he might quickly here undoe.

At night then a lodging him a got,
and for his supper he then did pay :
He told the host then heed goe lig in his bed,
who straight took a candle and shewd him the way.

Then with spying of farlies in the citie,
because he had never been there beforne,
He lee so long a bed the next day,
the Court was remov'd to Windsor that morne.

You ha laine too long then, then said his host,
you ha laine too long by a great while :
The king is now to Windsor gone ;
he's further to seeke by twenty mile.

I thinke I was corst, then said the poore man ;
if I had been wise I might ha consider.
Belike the King of me has gotten some weet :
he had neere gone away had not I come hither.

He fled not for you, said the hoste ;
but hie you to Windsor as fast as you may :
Be sure it will requite your cost,
for looke, what's past the king will pay.

But when he came at Windsor Castle,
with his bumble staff upon his backe,
Although the gates wide open stood
he layd on them till he made um cracke.

Why, stay ! pray friend, art mad ? quoth the Porter ;
what makes thee keepe this stirre to day ?
Why, I am a tenant of the Kings,
and have a message to him to say.

The King has men enough, said the Porter,
your message well that they can say.
Why, there's neere a knave the King doth keepe
shall ken my secret mind to day.

I were told, ere I came from home,
ere I got hither it would be dear bought :
Let me in, Ise give thee a good single penny.
I see thou wilt ha small, ere thou't doe for nought.

Gramercy, said the Porter then ;
thy reward's so great I cannot say nay.
Yonder's a Nobleman within the court,
Ile first heare what he will say.

When the Porter came to the Nobleman,
he sayd he would shew him a pretty sport :
There's sike a clowne come to the gate,
as came not this seven yeares to the Court.

He cals all knaves the King doth keepe ;
he raps at the gates and makes great din ;
He's passing liberall of reward ;
heed give a good single penny to be let in.

Let him in, sayd the Nobleman.
Come in, fellow, the Porter gan say :
If thou come within thy selfe, he sayde,
thy staffe behind the gate must stay.

And this cuckolds curre must lig behind :
what a deele, what a cut hast got with thee !
The King will take him up for his owne sel,
Ise warrant, when as he him doth see.

Beshrew thy limbes, then said the poore man ;
then mayst thou count me foole, or worse.
I wat not what banckrout lies by the King ;
for want of money he may picke my purse.

That's to be fear'd, the Porter said ;
Ise wish you goe in well arm'd ;
For the King he hath got mickle company,
and among them all, you may soone be harm'd.

Let him in with his staffe and his dog, said the Lord,
and with that he gave a nod with's head, and beck
with's knee.

If you be Sir King, then said the poore man,
as I can very well thinke you be ;

For I was told ere I came from home,
you're the goodliest man ere I saw beforne ;
With so many jingle jangles about ones necke,
as is about yours, I never saw none.

I am not the King, said the Nobleman,
fellow, although I have a proud coat.
If you be not the King, helpe me to the speech of him,
you seeme a good fellow, Ise gi you a groat.

Gramercy, said the Nobleman ;
the rewards so great, I cannot say nay.
Ile go know the Kings pleasure, if I can ;
till I come againe be sure thou stay.

Heres sike a staying, then said the poore man ;
belike the Kings better than any in our countrey.
I might be gone to th' farthest nuke i'th' house,
neither lad nor lowne to trouble me.

When the Nobleman came to the King,
he said he would shew his Grace good sport :
Heres such a clowne come to the gate,
as came not this seven yeares to the Court.

He cals all knaves your Highnesse keepes,
and more than that, he termes them worse.
Heele not come in without his staffe and his dogge,
for fear some bankrout will picke his purse.

Let him in with his staffe and his dog, said our King,
that of his sport we may see some.
Weele see how heele handle everything,
as soone as the match of bowles is done.

The Nobleman led him through many a roome,
and through many a gallery gay.
What a deele doth the king with so many toome houses,
that he gets um not fild with corne and hay ?

What gares these bables and babies all ?
some ill have they done that they hang by the walls ?
And staring aloft at the golden rooffe toppe,
at a step he did stumble, and downe he falles.

Stand up, good fellow, the Nobleman sayd ;
what, art thou drunke or blind, I trow ?
Ise neither am blinde nor drunke, he sed,
although, in my sowle, you oft are so.

It is a disease, said the Lord againe,
that many a good man is troubled withall.
Quoth the Country man then, yet I made your proud
stones
to kisse my backside, though they gave me a fall.

At last they spide the King in an ally,
yet from his game he did not start.
The day was so hot, he cast off his doublet ;
he had nothing from the wast up but his shirt.

Loe, yonder's the King, said the Noble man :
behold, fellow ; loe, where he goes.
Beleevet hee's some unthrift, sayes the poore man,
that has lost his money and pawnd his cloathes.

How hapt he hath gat neere a coate to his backe ?
this bowling I like not ; it hath him undone.
Ise warrant that fellow in those gay cloathes,
he hath his coyne and his doublet won.

But when he came before the King,
the Nobleman did his curtesie :
The poore man followed after him,
and gave a nod with his head and a becke with his knee.

If you be Sir King, then said the poore man,
as I can hardly thinke you be ;
Here is a gude fellow that brought me hither,
is liker to be the King than ye.

I am the King, his Grace now sayd ;
Fellow, let me thy cause understand.
If you be Sir King, Ime a tennant of yours,
that was borne and up brought within your owne
lande.

There dwels a Lawyer hard by me,
and a fault in my lease he sayes he hath found ;
And all was for felling five poor ashes,
to build a house upon my owne ground.

Hast thou a lease here ? said the King,
or canst thou shew to me the deed ?
He put it into the Kings owne hand,
and said, Sir, tis here, if that you can read.

Why, what if I cannot ? said our King ;
that which I cannot, another may.
I have a boy of mine owne, not seven yeares old,
a will read you as swift as yould run i'th' highway.

Lets see thy lease, then said our King :
then from his blacke boxe he puld it out.
He gave it into the Kings owne hand,
with foure or five knots ty'd fast in a clout.

Wast neere unloose these knots? said the King:
he gave it to one that behind him did stay.
It is a proud horse, then said the poore man,
will not carries owne provinder along the highway.

Pay me forty shillings, as Ise pay you,
I will not thinke much to unloose a knot:
I would I were so occupied every day.
Ide unloose a score on um for a groat.

When the King had gotten these letters to read,
and found the truth was very so:
I warrant thee, thou hast not forfeit thy lease,
if that thou hadst feld five ashes moe.

I, every one can warrant me,
but all your warrants are not worth a flea;
For he that troubles me and will not let me goe,
neither cares for warrant of you nor me.

The Lawyer he is sike a crafty elfe:
a will make a foole of twenty such as me;
And if that I sald gang hang my sel,
Ise trow, he and I sud neere agree.

For he's too wise for all our towne,
and yet we ha got crafty knaves beside.
Heele undoe me and my wife and bearnes:
alas, that ever I saw this tide!

Thoust have an injunction, said our King ;
from troubling of thee he will cease :
Heele either shew thee a good cause why,
or else heele let thee live in peace.

What's that injunction ? said the poore man,
good Sir, to me I pray you say.
Why, it is a letter Ile cause to be written :
but art thou as simple as thou shewest for to day ?

Why, ift be a letter, Ime neere the better :
keep't to yourselfe and trouble not me.
I could a had a letter cheaper written at home,
and neere a come out of mine owne countrey.

Thoust have an attachment, said our King :
charge all thou seest to take thy part.
Till he pay thee an hundred pound,
be sure thou never let him start.

A, wais me ! the poore man saide then ;
you ken no whit what you now do say.
A won undoe me a thousand times,
ere he such a mickle of money will pay.

And more than this, there's no man at all
that dares anongst him for to lift a hand ;
For he has got so much guile in his budget,
that he will make all forfeit their land.

If any seeme against thee to stand,
be sure thou come hither straight way.
A, marry, is that all Ise get for my labour?
then I may come trotting every day.

Thou art hard a beleefe, then said our King :
to please him with letters he was right willing.
I see you have taken great paines in writing,
with all my heart Ile give you a shilling.

Ile have none of thy shilling, said our King ;
man, with thy money God give thee win.
He threw it into the Kings bosome ;
the money lay cold next to his skin.

Beshrew thy heart, then said our King ;
thou art a carle something too bold :
Dost thou not see I am hot with bowling?
the money next to my skin lies cold.

I neere wist that before, said the poore man,
before sike time as I came hither.
If the Lawyers in our country thought twas cold,
they would not heape up so much together.

The King call'd up his Treasurer,
and bad him fetch him twenty pound.
If ever thy errant lye here away,
Ile beare thy charges up and downe.

When the poore man saw the gold tendred,
for to receive it he was willing.
If I had thought the King had so mickle gold,
beshrew my heart, Ide a kept my shilling.

Now, farewell, good fellow, quoth the King :
see that my command you well doe keepe ;
And when that the Lawyer you have in your hands,
looke that he doe pay you before he doe sleepe.

Gods benison light on your soule, then he sayd,
and send you and yours where ever you gang :
If that I doe ever meete with your fewd foes,
Ise sweare by this staffe that their hide I won bang.

And farewell, brave lads now, unto you all :
I wod all may win and neane of you leese.
Haude ; take this same tester among you awe :
I ken that you Courtiers doe all looke for fees.

Thus with a low courtsie of them he tooke leave,
thinking from the Court to take his way ;
But some of the gentlemen then of the Kings
would needs invite him at dinner to stay.

A little entreaty did soone serve his turne :
a thought himsel as good a man as them all.
But where (quoth he) sall I have this same feast ?
then straightway they ushered him into the hall.

Such store of cheare on the board there was plast,
that made the countryman much for to muse.
Quoth he, I doe think you are all craftie knaves,
that such a service you will not refuse.

I nere saw such a flipper de flapper before ;
here's keele I doe think is made of a whetstone.
Heer's dousets and flappjacks, and I ken not what ;
I thinke, in the worlde such feasts there is none.

When he had well din'd and had filled his panch,
then to the winecellar they had him straight way,
Where they with brave claret and brave old Canary,
they with a foxe tale him soundly did pay.

So hard they did ply him with these strong wines,
that he did wrong the long seames of his hose,
That two men were faine to leade him up stayres ;
so, making indentures, away then he goes.

The poore man got home next Sunday :
the Lawyer soone did him espy.
Oh, Sir, you have been a stranger long,
I thinke from me you have kept you by.

It was for you indeed, said the poore man,
the matter to the King as I have tell.
I did as neighbours put it in my head,
and made a submission to the King my sel.

What a deel didst thou with the King ? said the Lawyer:
could not neighbours and friends agree thee and me ?
The deel a neighbour or friend that I had,
that would a bin sike a daies man as he.

He has gin me a letter, but I know not what they cal't ;
but if the King's words be frue to me,
When you have read and perused it over,
I hope you will leave, and let me be.

He has gin me another, but I know not what 'tis ;
but I charge you all to hold him fast.
Pray you that are learned this letter reade ;
which presently made them all agast.

Then they did reade this letter plaine,
the Lawyer must pay him a hundred pound.
You see the King's letter, the poore man did say,
and unto a post he sal straight way be bound.

Then unto a post they tide him fast,
and all men did rate him in cruell sort ;
The lads, and the lasses, and all the towne
at him had great glee, pastime and sport.

Ile pay it, Ile pay it, the Lawyer said :
the attachment, I say, it is good and faire ;
You must needes something credit me,
till I goe home and fetch some meare.

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THE KING, ETC.

Credit ! nay, thats it the King forbad :
 he bad, if I got thee, I should thee stay.
The Lawyer payd him an hundred pound
 in ready money, ere he went away.

Would every Lawyer were served thus !
 from troubling poore men they would cease :
They'd either show them a good cause why,
 or else they'd let them live in peace.

And thus I end my merry tale,
 which shewes the plain mans simplenesse,
And the Kings great mercy in righting his wrongs,
 and the Lawyers fraud and wickednesse.

FINIS.

M. P.

9434

